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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BRUSSELS 000579

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SUBJECT: EU REACTION TO BURMA POLICY REVIEW UPDATE

enhanced incentives and forward-leaning GAERC conclusions, the UK's Asia Director pushed back, and urged colleagues to maintain restraint while awaiting the results of the USG policy review. The British were backed by Denmark and the Netherlands, although both are typically softer on Burma.

17. (C//NF) Gillespie, Schulte, and the UK's Brussels-based Asia officer tell us that Fassino, who was generally poorly regarded and thought to be somewhat naive, seems to have improved his standing among Member States with last week's strong interventions.

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EU willing to await U.S. conclusions  
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18. (C//NF) Contacts were universally pleased at the prospect of a new U.S. approach to Burma. While some Member States remain skeptical of sanctions in general, most were supportive of U.S. reported plans for dialogue with the regime and increased assistance, while maintaining pressure for democratic and human rights reforms. The UK, France, Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark wanted the EU to remain firm, with France pointing out that the United States could more easily talk to the ruling junta via military-to-military channels. Germany and Austria argued that the EU should be more pragmatic about how to reduce the military role over time and were generally soft on the way forward. The European Commission would be eager to coordinate closely on new or enhanced assistance programs, and disclosed that their Bangkok-based aid workers enjoy easy access to nearly every corner of the country. Likeminded Member States indicated a willingness to listen to the results of the U.S. policy review and revisit their own policy later this year. Southern European states, led by Germany and Italy, are pushing for GAERC conclusions now that would encourage dialogue and development assistance.

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Czech confusion leads to detailed conclusions  
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19. (C//NF) Brussels-based EU institutional and Member State contacts revealed that the Czech Presidency showed poor internal coordination regarding the question of GAERC conclusions on the Common Position rollover. One contact in the Council Secretariat told us that he sent strongly worded draft conclusions to Member States for comment on a recent Friday, upon instructions from the Czech Presidency in Prague

over his objections. Subsequently, the Czech Asia Director disagreed with his subordinate's decision to sign out the draft conclusions, and contacted the Council Secretariat to instruct them to cancel the message. The message had already been sent, however, and with Fassino's strengthening performance and the mistaken release of the draft, Member States decided to press ahead with detailed conclusions, instead of the short comment on the rollover that we had initially anticipated.

MURRAY

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